

**To: Assemblywoman Diane Harkey and Staff**

**From: Gino Folchi**

**Date: Sunday June 24, 2012**

**Re: Weekly HSR Clips June 18 to June 24**

### **Blogs**

#### **Environmental tampering and the money grab**

But in addition to funding the segment, there is also the real threat of long term damage to the state that tampering with CEQA can cause. Once a project of this size has been exempted, it opens the door for every project to be exempted. It will become yet one more political card to be played at the whim of the governor. Most environmental groups do not want this to occur. What is Brown thinking? **Kathy Hamilton** [Examiner](#) – 06/19/12

#### **Jerry Brown abandons bid to protect high-speed rail from CEQA**

Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California, said a Brown adviser sent environmentalists and transportation advocates an e-mail today indicating the Democratic governor was backing off. Phillips said the administration suggested it could revisit the proposal later. "They're not interested for now," Phillips said. "So I feel like I can sleep well tonight, and there will be another day when we will have to struggle with how we can ensure that we protect environmental quality." **David Siders** [Capitol Alert](#) – 06/20/12

#### **California Bullet Train's Promise of Jobs is Overstated, Says UCLA**

Now comes word that the job boon promised as part its construction is just a pipe dream going off the rails: Today the respected [UCLA Anderson Forecast](#), one of the premier barometers of the California and American economy, said the [California High-Speed Rail](#)'s construction through the Central Valley wouldn't really put much of a dent in our sorry unemployment figures (10.6 percent in the Golden State). **Dennis Romero** [LA Weekly](#) – 06/20/12

#### **Jerry Brown suggests high-speed rail CEQA proposal only delayed**

Gov. Jerry Brown said this afternoon that he is not abandoning a proposal to insulate California's high-speed rail project from environmental lawsuits, suggesting he was only delaying the legislation until sometime after the Legislature considers funding for the project. The Democratic governor is seeking legislative approval, likely next week, to start construction of the \$68 billion project. **David Siders** [Capitol Alert](#) -- 06/22/12

#### **A Brown/Lincoln Connection—High Speed Rail, “Internal Improvements,” and a Bad Economy**

Can you see the similarities? *Public sentiment turned against the system...defending the system against rising criticism...unwillingness to abandon the policies.* Brown's stubborn pursuit of the High Speed Rail fits easily into the paragraph's description of Lincoln's

stance. With no expectation for adequate funds on the horizon, initial investment by taxpayers could be wasted. I don't fault the governor for thinking big. And, I confess, a time or two I have followed the Lincoln maxim of hugging a bad bargain all the tighter. However, we have to be realistic. **Joel Fox** [Fox & Hounds](#) – 06/22/12

## **Columnists**

### **Assembly committee kills bond misuse bill**

California's bond debt is on steroids, but it's the taxpaying residents who will be responsible for the financial meltdown. "Despite the implosion of the worldwide economy in the fall of 2008, a plunge that hit California particularly hard, California voters generously took on another \$10.5 billion in debt to lay the preliminary tracks for a high speed rail system and to fund improvements for children's hospitals," the Little Hoover Commission found. **Katy Grimes** [CalWatchDog](#) – 06/20/12

### **California high speed rail is dead**

Now the city of Chowchilla could cave and voluntarily dismiss their lawsuit. But there are other groups eager to challenge the project in court too. Farmers have already [sued to stop the project](#) in state court alleging that the Rail Authority's plan violates the wording of the state ballot measure that created. If they lose on those grounds, there is nothing stopping them, or other farmers, from later pursuing a NEPA or CEQA claim. Either way, there is simply no way California will be able to break ground on the project before the federal deadline. **Conn Carroll** [Washington Examiner](#) – 06/21/12

## **Editorials**

### **A welcome development for bullet-train skeptics**

One of the most troubling parts of the proposal to connect the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas with a 220-mph bullet train has apparently been cleared off the tracks. [Gov. Jerry Brown is dropping legislation](#) that would have made it harder for environmentalists and agricultural land owners to stop construction of high-speed rail lines. Brown wanted to block judges from issuing injunctions affecting the bullet train project. Our editorial page was among those objecting to this attempt to shield the train project from normal legal review. **Editorial Board** [LA Daily News](#) – 06/21/12

## **News**

### **Johnson joins 4 other mayors in high-speed rail funding push**

Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson has joined the political push for funding to begin on a high-speed rail in California. Johnson's picture will appear in an ad Wednesday in the San Francisco Chronicle, along with four other California mayors who favor building the controversial project pegged at \$68 billion. **Tom DuHain** [KCRA](#) -- 06/20/12

### **Gov. Jerry Brown scraps idea to soften environmental scrutiny on high-speed rail**

The Brown administration on Wednesday abandoned its plan to ease environmental scrutiny of the \$69 billion bullet train, backing off quickly after strong opposition from

environmentalists threatened the project altogether. The proposal was designed to prevent opponents from halting high-speed rail construction in court on environmental grounds. It was tied to a key vote in the Legislature in coming weeks on whether to build the first \$6 billion leg of tracks in the Central Valley. **Mike Rosenberg** [SJ Mercury News](#) – 06/20/12

### **Governor backs away from bullet train fight**

But the idea had put him at odds with most of the state's green groups. The Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Planning and Conservation League were among the organizations that in recent days had strongly criticized Brown's plan. The Sierra Club had called Brown's idea "dangerous" and "a political mistake." Most of the state's environmental groups backed Brown in his 2010 campaign for governor. Several green groups have been firm supporters of the rail project, which would link San Francisco and Los Angeles with trains traveling more than 200 miles per hour. **Lance Williams** [California Watch](#) – 06/21/12

### **California bullet train faces tough vote in Senate**

The skeptics in the Senate say privately that they are coming under enormous political pressure from organized labor, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and the Obama administration, which plans to contribute \$3.3 billion to the work. Whether they will fall in line with their party is unclear. "The votes are not there," said Sen. Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord), chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. "I am a 'no' at this time." "I don't think there are 21 votes in the Senate until people have a chance to examine their options," said Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), chairman of a special committee on the high-speed rail project. **Ralph Vartabedian & Chris Megerian** [LAT](#) (\$) -- 06/23/12

### **Global visions of bullet trains**

Europe has a train culture where gas is two to three times more expensive than it is in California. China uses dirt-cheap labor to build tracks at an alarming rate. South Africa needed fast trains to serve the World Cup, and the Middle East wants a faster pilgrimage to holy cities during Hajj and Ramadan. California, meanwhile, has high labor costs and strict environmental laws, an awful formula for building a gigantic infrastructure project. We've built dozens of airports and freeways, generating the kind of sprawl and travel options that make a bullet train system harder to justify. **Mike Rosenberg** [Contra Costa Times](#) – 06/24/12

### **Internal Affairs: Author turns California high-speed rail into 'action thriller'**

IA recalls South Bay transit veteran Rod Diridon, then a board member for the California bullet train project, predicting a few years ago that someone would write a book about the infamous rail line one day. We don't think "Midnight Departure" is what he had in mind. A project opponent named Dan Lombard just penned a 190-page novel that reads like a thinly veiled satire of California's \$69 billion high-speed rail line, whose price tag has led critics to say it should be abandoned. The cover of the "action thriller" is a bullet train comically bursting through a black background, and the inside resembles a fictionalized manifesto against the project. **Staff** [San Jose Mercury News](#) -- 06/24/12

## **Op-Eds**

### **Despite naysayers, high-speed rail on track to be a game changer**

Kern County needs those jobs. According to the California Economic Development Department, 55,000 people in Kern County were unemployed and looking for work as of April 2012, the most recent figures available. That's a 14.5 percent unemployment rate, compared with 10.5 percent for the state. Kern County is also continually among the top cities with poor air quality, according to the American Lung Association. High-speed rail will help clean California's air by reducing emissions by 3 million tons annually.

**Howard Silver** [Bakersfield Californian](#) -- 06/21/12

### **Revised high-speed rail plan deserves support**

The Bay Area News Group has not been kind to California's high-speed rail project, comparing it to the monorail at Disneyland, calling it delusional and saying the project's success is equal to a snowball's survival rate in hell. The Bay Area Council -- the business group that in the face of similar withering criticism helped create BART, bridges across the bay, and numerous other invaluable pieces of vital public infrastructure -- begs to differ. **Jim Wunderman** [Oakland Tribune](#) -- 06/21/12

## **Reports**

### **Anderson Forecast: Sluggish economy continues despite housing market improvements**

Nickelsburg and Ahluwalia find that for Japan, high-speed rail does not seem to have any significant aggregate economic development component. Their results cast doubt on the economic benefit claims for CHSRL. In a separate study of the Japanese system, they also found that high-speed rail tends to create sprawl as it lowers the cost for commuters and makes more far-flung locations possible bedroom communities. This may be a benefit or detriment, depending on one's viewpoint, they say. **UCLA Anderson** [UCLA](#) -- 06/20/12

## **Video**

### **California High Speed Rail Progress Report**

California High-Speed Rail Authority Chair Dan Richard reports on the recent significant changes and progress at the Authority. **Dan Richard** [California High-Speed Rail Authority](#) -- 06/21/12

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